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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6245
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2831
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 9013
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 2463
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7319
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0655
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1691
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6476

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000905

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [SOCI](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: TEACHERS PRESS ON WITH HUNGER STRIKE AS UNION
PLANS WEEKLY SIT-INS

REF: ALGIERS 865

Classified By: CDA, a.i. Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (SBU) Algerian contract teachers on a hunger strike since July 15 (ref) are continuing their efforts to pressure the Ministry of National Education (MNE) into negotiations concerning unpaid salaries, recent lay-offs and appointments in Algeria's career teaching service. Relations between the authorities and protesters remained tense during the past week, and MNE officials have stubbornly refused to acknowledge the teachers' demands. The National Council for Contract Teachers (CNEC) and the Autonomous Union of Administration Staff (SNAPAP) coordinated efforts to organize another series of sit-ins in front of the Presidency on August 5 and 12. In both cases, Algerian police impeded unionists, contract teachers and civil society activists from assembling near the heavily-guarded compound. Local press reported that on August 12 police detained some participants for the duration of the planned sit-in. SNAPAP and CNEC announced to the press that they have filed a complaint with the ILO and WHO, and vowed to stage weekly sit-ins until the government agrees to talks.

¶2. (C) Algeria's independent French-language newspapers continued to devote significant -- and increasingly dramatic -- coverage to the strike. The pages of several dailies on August 13 ran headlines alleging the "brutal" treatment and "severe repression" that protesters had suffered. One article even featured a picture of police in full riot gear on the heels of a crowd of what appears to be hundreds of fleeing Algerians. In reality, the picture turned out to be an archival photo unrelated to the strike. Journalists who covered the August 12 sit-in told us that despite the dramatic headlines, the protesters "were not beaten." Salima Hanane, a contract teacher in Algiers, told us that no more than 20 protesters showed up for each sit-in, and said that

although police forcefully prevented people from gathering, she has not heard of anyone having been seriously injured as a result.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The contract teachers have been on hunger strike for 30 days and neither side in the dispute has signaled a willingness to compromise. Although the government has shown relative restraint in its use of force, the MNE's obstinate refusal to speak with the teachers seems only to be fueling the teachers' determination to continue the strike and risks deepening the crisis as Algeria draws closer to the start of the school year. Prominent human rights lawyer Mostefa Bouachachi, who attended both sit-ins, told us the situation was deteriorating and that sooner or later the government would be forced to sit down with the

teachers. He predicted, however, that the conflict would be far more complicated to resolve if the government waited until the school year got underway.

DAUGHTON